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# The American RECORD GUIDE



DECEMBER, 1948 VOL. XV, NO. 4  
EDITED BY PETER HUGH REED  
THIRTY CENTS

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# The American RECORD GUIDE

December, 1948 ▲ Vol. XV, No. 4

formerly THE AMERICAN MUSIC LOVER



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December, 1948

## Editorial Notes

There are quite a number of manufactured pickups for performance of long playing records on the market. Astatic has a new one, Model FL-33, with frequency range from 30 to 10,000 c.p.s. If one desires to adapt this arm to play standard 78 r.p.m. discs, the cartridge can be easily removed and another — LP 78 — inserted. No tools or adjustments are required. As both cartridges operate at five gram needle pressure, using sapphire stylus, longer life results for one's records. To use both these cartridges, one's player has to have a two-speed feature. As not many changers employ this, many will have to make completely new installations. In this regard, it is of interest to know that Webster is bringing out a changer model, with two-speed motor, which permits the use of this new tone arm, and — in the near future — will also come equipped with a newer model Astatic pickup which requires no removal of the cartridge. This latter pickup is a double head which can be easily turned to place the right stylus point in playing position for either type of record.

The Philco Player, which was introduced at the same time as the long-playing record, employed an osmium point, which has been found less satisfactory than a sapphire one. Tests made with the osmium point revealed its life one-tenth of that of the sapphire, hence figuring a potential playing-time for a sapphire stylus riding at 5 grams, as 600, the life of the osmium would not be much above 60 plays before damage to the disc occurred. We are given to understand that sapphire replacements will be available through Columbia and Philco in the near future. This is decidedly a step in the right direction.

From our experience we have found the magnetic pickup preferable in reproduction of the Microgroove discs. It is a well known fact that the crystal being a high impedance device has a tendency to emphasize the low frequencies better than the highs. However, the fact that reproducing systems do not generally go as low as the crystal, an unnaturalness often results on the low range. This causes muddy basses and sometimes unpleasant rumbling. The magnetic pickup, properly mounted to compensate for its lack of bass response, reproduces a clean, clear bass along with more proficient highs. Of course, some equipment is especially designed to function best with crystal pickups and may not adapt itself satisfactorily to modification.

There have been a few complaints from readers that the long-playing record has an objectional rumble. This condition does not exist in the record itself, but is the result of other things. Astatic in its Data Sheet with its pickup, Model LP-33, gives the following important instructions: "For best results, the turntable assembly should be level and suspended upon live rubber stand-off pillars to isolate same from cabinet and prevent violent jarring from effecting performance of player". It is *absolutely essential* that the cabinet and the turntable are level. This not only prevents the needle jumping in the grooves but facilitates its proper tracking.

Fundamentally, the speed of a motor is not important as far as frequency is concerned. In the past the speed of the motor was governed not in relation to its performance of existent high frequencies but rather in relation to its performance of the existent low frequencies in the record. Motors and turntables from the earliest days had an objectionable rumble which at low speeds was more amplified than at high speeds. The universal adaption of 78 r.p.m. by the record industry in those earlier days was conditioned not only by motor and turntable rumble but by dynamic production. H. Courtney Bryson, in his book *The Gramophone Record*, tells us that "loudness is increased with increasing record speed, because it does not take so great an amplitude in a high note as in a low one to produce the amount of loudness as judged by normal ears". The problem of reproducing records at 33-1/3 r.p.m. in the old days was the in-

ability to get a good motor, running at that speed, at a low cost. Not only were the cheaper models given to pitch fluctuation but more pronounced rumble existed than from the 78 r.p.m. unit. As one leading engineer of our acquaintance says, "This problem is not completely solved today, though it has been considerably bettered. If tomorrow motors are made, operating at 20 r.p.m., which do not emphasize the rumble, there is no just reason why recordings with longer playing time at this speed could not be placed on the market". It is a long established fact that the lower the speed the more the problem of the noise of the motor prevails.

This magazine has always emphasized the importance of a properly mounted turntable motor and pickup. We now wish to emphasize the greater importance of the mounting of these components in relation to the long-playing record. The latter is an excellent disc and can be reproduced most satisfactorily.

If one encounters trouble reproducing any record — pitch-wavering rumble or even wear — the fault may be due to one of several causes, the most common of which are:

1. An improperly mounted motor assembly.
2. The gears of the motor may be worn or badly needing lubrication.
3. Wornout bearings.
4. The spindle (in the case of rim-driven motors only) may be defective, or the belts too loose.

We have for years emphasized the necessity of having one's motor completely overhauled at least once a year, and also of oiling it every so often. Most motors have small points where a few drops of oil fed every two or three months adds to the life of the unit. The yearly lubrication is of the utmost importance as oil alone does not suffice. Special motor grease must be replaced after a length of time, as the heat of the motor gradually dissipates this.

A number of readers have written asking us why we have not published more technical data. It has not always been possible to get reliable information on such matters. However, recently we made arrangements with a technician associated with one of the largest research concerns in the east, who will from time to time present some facts on reproduc-

(Continued on page 100)



Edward R. Murrow

## A TALKING HISTORY

### Columbia's "I Can Hear It Now"

All history requires its narrator, and in this case we have the voice not the pen of the chronicler. Fittingly it is the voice of Edward R. Murrow who, on the morning of D-Day in the British Broadcasting House in London after heading the official announcement to the Armed Forces, turned to his engineer and expressed an unusual idea.

"In the old days they used to write history," he said. "These days, we're *talk-ing* history . . . One of these days I'd like to write a history for ear, so that in time people might have a permanent record of the voices and sounds of these war years."

That idea, expressed in an ominous moment, was destined to form one of the most unusual spoken records ever made. And now, after four long years, in Columbia's *I Can Hear It Now* (album 800 or Microgroove disc ML4908) Murrow's idea has become a reality — an audible history of "our times" through the fateful period from 1932 to 1945.

For the past two years, CBS newscaster Edward R. Murrow and radio writer Fred Friendly have been working on the spoken history of thirteen foreboding and exciting years. To gather material for this

work, Murrow, Friendly and J. G. Gude (the recording producer) listened to more than 500 hours of old broadcasts before assembling the 45 minutes of *I Can Hear It Now*. This was no easy task. They burrowed into the dusty, uncatalogued files of three radio networks, playing hundreds of records. Friendly and his wife even spent three weeks in the National Archives at Washington, inspecting a collection which contained every record made by the army during the war, to emerge with only one item — a recording of MacArthur's speech accepting the Japanese surrender on the U. S. Missouri, which was unfortunately broken. It took, as Murrow says, "a miracle of clamps and re-recording to obtain a clear version of that speech on the final wax".

In selecting excerpts from the speeches chosen as possible content for this audible history, Friendly states "editing out essentials from the wealth of material we had amassed was a tough job". This meant hours of listening to get often "one colorful minute which we felt expressed the essential character" of a man. In choosing the Roosevelt material, "there was an embarrassment of riches", and "to boil down Winston

Churchill's magnificent sonorities to seven minutes required some heartbreaking cuts".

So from the sound tracks of old broadcasts and many other sources, by using the actual voices and words of the people who played important roles in what was a portentous and exciting a period as any in the history of the world, came the first *talking* history — *I Can Hear It Now*.

People who live in ominous times are not always cognizant of their historical importance. Perhaps they shun the unpleasant realities. "I am seeking only to face realities and to face them without soft concealments," said Woodrow Wilson, voicing a creed we could all adopt in these troubled times. *I Can Hear It Now* does much to awaken us to present-day tragedy of world disunity. It is an experience at once unique and absorbing to have this history of so important a span of years, through which we ourselves moved, relived so forcefully and vitally. Only smug-hypocrisy would avoid or deny the realism of its drama. In years to come our children's children will relive, through this record, the eventful period in which we moved, and in so doing perhaps profit by it.

*I Can Hear It Now* binds the significant speeches of such history-making men as Churchill, Roosevelt, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, MacArthur, Truman and many others. In all the recording contains more than 70 voices, beginning with the great homespun philosopher, Will Rogers — whose remarks about America and the Depression should be heard not retold, and continuing down through the long years to MacArthur's acceptance speech and a final summation by Mr. Murrow.

Edward R. Murrow is an ace-reporter of radio, whose greatest contribution has been his gift for making the plight of war-ridden people palpable to millions. He has brought the far-away events to the doorsteps of his listeners, helping dispel with truthful commentary the superstition that lands separated from us by countless miles are not as vital as our own land.

*I Can Hear It Now* offers a larger and more immediately accessible collection of speeches than can be found in any radio network files or government archives. Its value lies in its skillful correlation by the man who conceived that extraordinary idea on D-Day.

For it is Murrow's narration which gives substance and life, purpose and coherence to the historical procession. The narrative does not pursue strict chronological order, yet the shifting backward and forward has been cleverly devised in a most advised way to point up the drama. For this *talking* history proves as potent and moving a chronicle as any buried in the pages of a book. The words of Roosevelt and Churchill are more impressive to hear than to read: The power of poise is greater from the actual voice of Eisenhower, and more heart-moving are the spoken words of Lou Gehrig, the Duke of Windsor, and Arthur Godfrey — the latter describing the funeral procession of Roosevelt. For all of us this *talking* history evokes more memories in 45 minutes than the best of us could revive in ten times that period.

"The dedication of this audible history of our era," says Murrow with gentle irony, "should be to none other than James Caesar Petrillo, for without his ban on recorded music, the engineers would never have had the time or the companies the opportunity to produce such a portion of history in a recording."

—Peter Hugh Reed

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## Editorial Notes

(Continued from page 98)

ing and equipment which we feel certain will interest our readers. There has been a great deal of double-talk published in recent years on technical subjects and our wish to avoid this sort of thing has prevented more extensive comment in recent months. Recommending special equipment to the individual has never proved satisfactory in the majority of cases. People do not always like the same tonal characteristics, and not infrequently one may dislike extended range while another enjoys it. If recommended equipment is not properly aligned, it will not prove satisfactory. In connection with high fidelity, most people are under a misapprehension regarding its sound. There are many, who acquiring extended-range records, believe that the overall sound is reproducible on any equipment. As most commercial machines cut-off around 6,000 c.p.s., it is impossible to reproduce any higher frequencies on a



record through such equipment. Hence, it is not only a fallacy but an illusion that extended-range recording always sounds better than any other on commercial machines. We have emphasized this fact often in reviewing but have just reason to believe that not all people realize its logic.

The interest of readers and the consistently friendly approbation extended us prompts us to acknowledge our grateful thanks. If we have been remiss in answering letters, it has not been due to any willful neglect on our part, but to the inability to find the adequate time. There are so many fine recordings coming out these days that all associated in review work on this magazine have been hard pressed. Moreover, in these troublesome times, shortage, and incompetency of labor has resulted in more work for the few rather than the many. It is good to report an increase of reader interest in the past two months, which surely suggests the record business is very much alive. A number of dealers tell us that acceptance of the long-playing record has boosted sales figures.

At the last moment, before going to press, we are informed that the Petrillo ban on recording has been lifted. This is assuredly gratifying news.

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To all readers and friends we extend our wishes for a genuinely Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

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## FRIDA LEIDER

### Some Notes on her career and a Discography

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By Leo Riemans

#### II

The immense scope of Leider's repertoire (not unlike that of Gadski's) was alas lost to New York audiences. One of the incidents that seems to be remembered most was her breaking down during the last act of a performance of *Walkure*, and Manski ending the rest of her phrases from the wings. Since that incident always seems to crop up, I will counterbalance it with a similar, though more amusing

one. Some twenty years ago in Berlin, Leider was singing Sieglinde, when the Bruennhilde, the wife of a banker who insisted on making an untimely debut, was suddenly seized with an attack of stage fright. She implored Leider to sing "Ho-yo-to-jo" from the wings, while she herself scooped her spear and made facial motions like the best of fake Hollywood singers.

After leaving America, Leider continued to sing her leading roles for several years in Berlin and Bayreuth. But circumstances that had nothing to do with artistic motives, led her to withdraw a little more. Her success in London was undiminished. In 1936, she sang Kundry there, and alternated in the *Ring* with Flagstad, thus permitting a perfect comparison between these two stars, one that was definitely in favor of Leider. Flagstad's voice was, in my estimation, a pure lyric soprano of great beauty of tone, but with a volume larger than normal for that type of voice. This lead her to sing dramatic roles for which she was quite unfitted emotionally. Flagstad's purely lyric temperament, which made a hauntingly beautiful Elsa, Elisabeth, Agathe and similar roles, did not match her immense voice. Conversely far more singers are handicapped with an excess of temperament that their voices are incapable of fully expressing.

In Leider all the ingredients were perfectly matched, and like all truly great artists she could mould her temperament according to the requirements of the part. In 1937, she alternated once more with Flagstad, and in 1938 with Anny Konetzny, holding her own. She also appeared at this time with outstanding success as Isolde in Paris. In Bayreuth, where her Bruennhilde and Kundry were famed, her place was gradually usurped by Marta Fuchs, a former mezzo-soprano whose style was a relapse to the pre-Leider.

It is not difficult to find an explanation of Leider's German eclipse. She had always been opposed to mixing politics and art. In 1932, before Hitler came into power, she wrote: "It is an unjustifiable invasion in the objectivity of art, which ought to be invulnerable, when art is put in servitude to politics, as it is done today, alas. But art can work all the more conciliatory and comprehendingly if one puts oneself entirely in its service." The fact that she was, and still is married to the leader of the Berlin State Opera orchestra — the violinist Rudolf Deman — who is non-Aryan, made her *persona-non-grata* with Nazi officials.

While she was not permitted to sing at the opera, nor in foreign countries, Leider undauntingly conquered another branch of her art by giving song recitals. In this field she proved herself another Elena Gerhardt; her recitals with Raucheisen, as accompanist, were the most successful of wartime Germany. Luckily, two records were made by her in 1941, preserving this phase of her art. It is hoped that more will follow, as she is still very active in this field, and has recently been heard in some joint-recitals with that magnificent contralto Margaret Klose, in which the sang duets by Dvorak superlatively.

With the end of the war and the collapse of the Nazi regime, Leider found herself one of the little group of completely "pure" German artists who had never profited from it. She was the first to give concerts in ruined Berlin, and she recently surprised everybody by proving once again the universality of her artistry. One of her recent achievements was to act as producer and stage director of *Haensel und Gretel* at the Berlin State Opera (in the Admiralspalast Theatre). Despite the scarcity of material and the many privations, this production was called the most charming ever seen in Berlin. Incidentally, the role of Gretel was sung by that delightful coloratura Erna Berger.

Meanwhile, Leider's house, which had been spared in the bombardments, was ransacked and set on fire by the Russians when they captured Berlin. She now lives in the British zone in a tiny flat with a borrowed piano, but happy and content, probably with her husband. One wonders when she will be permitted to be heard outside of Germany.

It is unfortunate that Leider's records date from before 1933, and that few do her complete justice. Even so, I prefer many of them to technically superior recordings by other artists. I deplore the fact that no records exist of her 1933-1940 period. The fact that she portrayed her characters first of all through her singing makes all her recordings, despite their technical disadvantages, thrilling enough for the connoisseur. No other singer has quite caught that expression of sorrowful irony in Isolde's *Narrative*, "Das waer ein Schatz mein Herr und Ohm", to be followed by that majestic curse which she sings without any strain, and in a truly regal manner. Few others conveyed so clearly Isolde's hidden love for Tristan in the first part of that same narrative. Her Walkuere *Ho-jo-to-ho* was truly an exuberant battle-cry of a young goddess. Her Kundry, which she successfully sang at Bayreuth, was a psychological portrait of the utmost subtlety.

Leider's first recordings were made acoustically for Polydor (Deutsche Grammophon) between 1923 and 1926. Outmoded though they are, they are nonetheless of extreme interest as they contain many excerpts from roles not repeated in her electrically-made recordings. They are, in my estimation, indispensable in obtaining the complete picture of this remarkable singer. Technically, they are not worse — probably somewhat better — than those discs made one or two decades earlier. In view of this, I am faintly puzzled why the historic record societies almost exclusively issue the older records, and neglect the many interesting ones made just before the advent of electrical recording. Incidentally, many of the records of this later period are even rarer than the very old ones, as they were all withdrawn immediately when electrical records came out (in 1926 mostly). On the other hand, the records of 1910 had had 15 years of sales, while the later ones had been on the market only a very short time and consequently relatively few copies were sold.

# Leider's Polydor list:

- 65625 Weber: *Oberon — Ozean du Ungeheuer* (2 parts).
  - 65627 Wagner: *Tannhaeuser — Dich teure Halle, and Tristan und Isolde — Liebestod*.
  - 65641 Verdi: *Aida — O Vaterland, and Als Sieger kehre heim*.
  - 65704 Wagner: *Rienzi — Gerechter Gott, and Fliegende Hollander — Fuehlst du sen Schmerz, den tiefen Gram* (with Carl Guenther, tenor).
  - 65743 Beethoven: *Fidelio — Abscheulicher, wo eilst du hin* (2 parts).
  - 65744 Mozart: *Figaros Hochzeit — Heil'ge Quelle, and Nur zu fluechtig bist du entsch-wunden*.
  - 65745 Beethoven: *Ah, perfido!* (In Italian — 2 parts).
  - 65746 Wagner: *Schmerzen and Traueme*.
  - 65687 Puccini: *La Tosca — Nur deinentwegen wollst ich noch nicht sterben, and Ach die Augen* (with Carl Guenther, tenor).
  - 65691 Verdi: *Aida — Ich seh' wieder, and Entflieh'n aus diesem Lande wir* (with Carl Guenther).
- All of the above black-label discs were made during Leider's engagement at Hamburg. When she went to Berlin, she was promoted to the red-label class and continued her Polydor discs. These were at first single-sided, but they were almost immediately coupled (in 1924), so that I shall give the double-sided numbers only.
- 72835 Puccini: *La Tosca — Nur der Schoenheit* (this is coupled with Helene Wildbrunn's rendition of *Suicidio* from *La Gioconda*).
  - 72975 Verdi: *Der Troubadour — In deines Kerkers tiefe Nacht, and Es glaenzte schon das Sternenheer*.
  - 72976 Mozart: *Don Giovanni — Rache-arie, and Strauss: Ariadne auf Naxos — Es gibt ein Reich*.
  - 72977 Wagner: *Siegfried — Ewig war ich, and Parsifal — Ich sah das Kind*.
  - 72978 Wagner: *Die Walkuere — War es so schmaechlich, and Fliegende Hollander — Senta-ballade*.
  - 72979 Wagner: *Der Engel and Im Treibhaus*.
  - 72998 Verdi: *Don Carlos — O don fatale* (in Italian) (coupled with Mafalda Savatini's singing of *Vissi d'arte* from *Tosca*).
  - 72934 *Die Walkuere — Du bist der Lenz, and Wie dir die Stirn so offen steht* (with Lauritz Melchior?).
  - 72984 Wagner: *Die Goetterdaemmerung — Zu neuen Taten, and Lassic Liebst dich hier* (with Fritz Soot, tenor).
  - 72985 Wagner: *Siegfried — Heil dir Sonne and O kindischer Held* (with Soot).
  - 72986 Wagner: *Die Walkuere — Todesverku-endigung* (with Soot, 2 parts).
  - 72988 Verdi: *Der Troubadour — Sieh' meiner hellen Traenenflut and Befreit o welche Selig-keit* (with Heinrich Schlusnus).
  - 72961 Verdi: *Der Troubadour — Wilde Eifer-sucht im Herzen* (with Robert Hutt and Schlusnus), and *Ein Maskenball — Ach*



*midler Gattin* (with Schlusnus, Otto Helgers, and Martin Abendroth).

Besides the above, there was also a coupling of *O don fatale* and *Dich leure Halle* which appeared for a fleeting time in a supplement of 1926, but it is not in the 1927 catalogue. I have never heard it, and so cannot say whether it was an electrical, or merely a coupling of two acoustic recordings. (This was something Polydor frequently did). Among collectors it is a generally accepted fact that it was an early electrical, but so far I have never met anybody who actually has it.

Leider's first electrical H.M.V. discs were made in 1927 and issued in January 1928. Her last record was issued in 1932. Most of her electrical discs were made in Berlin, with orchestra under Leo Belch. They had the advantage of so-called "atmosphere" recording then used, which strongly suggests an actual stage performance. This is felt even more strongly as H.M.V. wisely provided her with a Brangaene and Guttrune to sing the intervening phrases. In Europe, such an obvious thing as complimentary vocal parts would not be omitted as they were in the 1945 recording by Traubel of *Isolde's Curse*. It virtually ruins the dramatic character of this famous scene; the omission of a Brangaene is inexplicable to me. Some of the Leider records were made in London with orchestra directed by Barbirolli (notably the magnificently sung arias from *Don Giovanni* and *Armide*) and with orchestra directed by Albert Coates. The latter, in my estimation, are the poorest. The *Tristan* duet, with Melchior, is rather too atmospheric for my taste; the voices seem to merge too much with the orchestra, so that few words can be understood and the characteristic timbre of both artists is submerged. (This is a diametrically opposed viewpoint to the opinions voiced by American record collectors, which suggests that our machines can do greater justice to these records. I have always preferred the Leider-Melchior recording of the *Tristan Love-Duet* to any other.—Editor.)

#### The Leider, H.M.V. Discs

- D-1323 *Die Walkuere—Ho-jo-to-jo* (with Friedrich Schorr) (Victor 9167).
- D-1324 *Die Walkuere—Wotan and Bruennhilde Scene, Act 2* (considerably abridged) (with Schorr) (Victor 9168).
- D-1327 *Die Walkuere—Bruennhilde and Sieglinde Scene, Act 3* (with Gota Ljungberg) (Victor 9173/74).
- D-1330/31 *Die Walkuere—Wotan and Bruennhilde Scene, Act 3* (with Schorr) (Victor 9174/75).
- D-1497 *Fidelio—Abschuelicher wo eilst du hin* (2 parts) (Victor 7118).

The absence of Leider from the miscellaneous *Goetterdaemmerung* album issued in 1929 was compensated by the issue of:

- D-2025/26 *Die Goetterdaemmerung—Final Scene* (assisted by Elfriede Marherr; orchestra directed by Blech).

#### Other H.M.V. discs

- DB-1553 Wagner: *Traeneme und Schmerzen* (Victor 7708).
- D-1532 and 1535 *Siegfried—Final Duet* (with Rudolf Lubenthal—abridged) (Victor 9813/14).
- D-1547 Gluck: *Armide—Ah si la libert:* (in French), and Mozart: *Don Giovanni Or sai chi l'onore* (in Italian).
- DB-1545 Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde—Liebestod*, and *Parsifal—Ich sah das Kind* (Victor 7523).
- D-1667 Wagner: *Tristan und Isolde—Doch non von Tristan und Er schur mit tausend Eiden* (with Elfriede Marheer as Brangaene—a soprano and rightly so!).
- D-1723/24 *Tristan und Isolde—Liebesduet* (with Melchior) (Victor 7273/74).

After a long recording silence, Leider made two records for Electrola in 1941, both lieder. Her accompanist being Michael Raycheisen (the husband of Maria Ivogun). These are:

- DB-5625 Schubert: *Erkloenig*, and *Auf dem Wasser zu singen*.
- DB-5626 Schumann: *Meine Rose*, *Marienwuermchen*, and *Widmung*.

These were the only recordings of her lieder artistry published, but it is understood that more were made, and as Electrola has been reported undamaged, it is to be hoped that the matrices of any others will be made available soon, particularly outside of Germany. I have the Schumann disc, and have heard the other once via radio. Leider's *Erkloenig* was most impressive, especially since she sang it simply without trying to convey four different voices. In fact, it bears a strong resemblance to the style of Johanna Gadschi, the singer to whom I have previously compared her. The other Schubert song is sung with a lightness of tone comparable to that of a Hempel or a Schumann.

The same lightness of tone prevails in her Schumann *Marienwuermchen*, while the grandeur of old appears in her singing of *Widmung*. But, to my way of thinking, the gem of the group is the rarely heard *Meine Rose*; her interpretation of this surpasses even the fine recording that Ria Ginster once made. Schumann's romanticism suits Leider perfectly, and I hope her unpublished recordings will contain more of his songs, including *Fruelingsnacht*, the perfect recording of which I am still awaiting.

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## CHILDREN'S RECORDS

*Pecos Bill*: Roy Rogers and Sons of the Pioneers. Victor Album Y-375, 3-10" discs.

*Johnny Appleseed*; Dennis Day, with Orchestra and Chorus under the direction of Ken Darby. Victor Album Y-368, 3-10" discs.

▲ Many a young heart will bump with delight at finding these records under the Christmas tree—especially the youngster who has seen Walt Disney's *Melody Time*—and who hasn't?

The wonderful saga of Peco Bill, the rootinest, tootinest cowboy in all Texas, one of the highlights of the picture, is here narrated by Roy Rogers and the Sons of the Pioneers, just as in the picture, but with several episodes added. Sound effects are evidently taken from the film. The result is a happy combination, expertly done.

*Johnny Appleseed*, an episode almost as delightful from the same film, is here told in a little more elaborated version, with all the parts played by Dennis Kay, just as in the picture. The background sounds again are surely taken from the sound-track. A happy way of telling a folk tale!

*Bambi*; Shirley Temple, with cast. Orchestra and Chorus conducted by Paul Smith. Victor Album Y-395, 3-10" discs.

▲ The same general plan is followed in this album—a combination of narration, actual voices and sounds from the Walt Disney film, interspersed with music and songs by "live" talent, who play the most important part.

Shirley Temple makes a charming narrator. She does not talk down to her

audience, but speaks naturally, warmly, and intimately. She will surely make a hit with the children.

In many way, this album is more successful than those from *Melody Time*, probably because it is more carefully planned and executed, but no small measure of the success is due to Shirley Temple. One surprising thing—the forest fire episode is omitted from the story completely and some of the crueler moments in the picture, like the shooting of Bambi's mother, are not over-emphasized.

*The Lively Little Rabbit and Farandole* (from Bizet's *L'Arlesienne Suite*, No. 1). Golden Record No. 2.

*The Shy Little Kitten and Humoresque, Op. 10. No. 2* (Tschaikowsky); Golden Record No. 3.

*The Tall Giraffe and The Funny Little Mouse*; Golden Record No. 7. All by Irene Wicker, The Singing Lady, with Mitchell Miller and Orchestra.

▲ These are the first of a series issued as a companion line to the Little Golden Books for very young children, published by Simon and Schuster. The stories are simple and unpretentious, but sung and narrated a bit preciously by Irene Wicker. A novel and interesting feature is the specially arranged (by Alec Wilder) music on the reverse sides of two of the discs. These may well prove to be of more lasting value to the child than the stories. Other discs contain similar musical excerpts from a dozen or more of the great composers.

The records are six inches in size, made of a colored, unbreakable plastic, in individual pictured folders. The recording is quite good and certainly one of the most attractive features is the low price—29c. These can serve as a modest beginning for a child's record library and as a good stepping stone to more important records. There are many other titles available in the series.

*The Boy Who Sang For The King*; Told and sung by Dennis Day, with Charles Dant and His Orchestra. Victor Album Y-376, 2-10" discs.

*The Wedding of the Princess*; Narrated by Paul Wing, with Eve Young, The Guild

(Continued on page 128)



# RECORD NOTES AND REVIEWS



BACH: *Christmas Oratorio* — *Sinfonia*; and HANDEL (arr. Beecham): *Amaryllis Suite* — *Gavotte*; Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Victor disc 12-0582, price \$1.25.

▲Schweitzer tells us "To the angels Bach gives a motive; it is founded on the light, floating rhythm that is given out by the strings and flutes in the *sinfonia* of the *Christmas Oratorio*, while the oboes represent the music of the shepherds". This is music of quiet reflection and gentle sweetness, which Beecham plays with extraordinary poise and finesse. One might question the level of dynamics, yet the mood seems the more compelling for its poetic restraint. Listening to this music I had a feeling of peace and security, and abiding faith. The *Gavotte* from the Handel suite that Beecham arranged (see *Music from the 18th Century*, reviewed elsewhere) has a quiet dignity which is fitting as an appendage to the Bach. The recording, completely satisfying, should not be turned up to make the music louder than the conductor has planned it. —P.H.R.

BARTOK: *Concerto for Orchestra*; Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Fritz Reiner. Columbia set MM-793, six discs, price \$8.50. Also Long-Playing disc No. ML-4102, price \$4.85.

▲This score, completed in 1943 for the Koussevitzky Music Foundation (two years before the composer's death) is a far cry from the concerto for orchestra as developed by Ph. Emmanuel Bach and adapted for present-day use by such craftsmen as Piston and Hindemith. There is a definite programmatic flavor to the five section work; it might almost be synthesis of incidental music for a film. It would also make a first-rate ballet. A high degree of emotional intensity is generated; atmospheric coloration abounds, inducing countless connected images of scenes and events that could be described or complemented by the music.

Bartok provided a scholarly dissertation for the original Carnegie Hall performance by the Boston Symphony in which he dissected his score in the stylized manner of program annotators, detailing such matters as exposition, use of sonata form, etc. All verbiage aside, this work is for me nothing more than a delightful rhapsody contrived from the tonal reminiscences of an outstanding musical personality. Hints of the acrid, angular, percussive outpourings of

earlier days are present, but in the final analysis it is a sunny, romantic exposition of the state of that man's great heart. His debt to the country of his childhood is expressed in the dance-like themes of the finale. There are momentary preoccupations with the successful working-out of thematic developments (as any professor worth his salt loves to do). These are but two of the complex elements of Bartok's cultural makeup, in which a curious blend of barbaric Magyar intensity and dry pedagogical exactitude intermingle, as when a startling *glissando* for pedal tympanum suddenly separates stiffly correct *fugato* passages.

Reiner has captured the varying moods of this kaleidoscopic orchestral picture with uncanny sagacity, faithfully recreating the composer's printed intentions. The influence of the conductor's technical prowess in training and rehearsal is strongly felt; the Pittsburgh players give an extraordinarily fine account of their assignments. The recording is satisfactory, with quiet surfaces.

Just one word of criticism. It seems a bit unsporting to spread a work of 37 minutes duration over 12 record sides. There are wide stretches of unused surface on several of the faces. Even with the high level of dynamics, ten sides should have been sufficient, the resultant economy favoring the over-worked pocketbooks of discriminating record collectors, who definitely should have this album on their "must" list.

—A.W.P.

**CHERUBINI:** *The Water Carrier — Overture*; Symphony Orchestra of the EIAR, conducted by A. La Rosa Parodi. Imported Cetra disc CB-20218, price \$2.50.

▲ It is not completely necessary to allocate oneself with the period of this overture for enjoyment of the music. However, knowledge of its time does much to make one realize its worth. Cherubini's opera *The Water Carrier (Il Portatore d'acqua)* in Italian, and *Les deux Journées* in French) written in 1790, is regarded by many as his masterpiece. Certainly, the overture — too infrequently heard in our concert halls these days — reveals a melodic fluency and a warmth of feeling which has equal appeal to the best of Weber's overtures. The harmonic writ-

ing is rich and the dramatic expression cogent. One could write a treatise on Cherubini's overtures.

The present performance is most welcome, being both efficient and smooth flowing, and the recording has resonant liveness and tonal richness.

—P.H.R.

**CIMAROSA:** *Il Matrimonio Segreto—Overture*; Symphony Orchestra of the EIAR, conducted by A. La Rosa Parodi. Imported Cetra disc CB-20216, price \$2.50. **CIMAROSA** (arr. Benjamin): *Concerto in C for Oboe and Strings*; Mitchell Miller (oboe) and the Sidenburg Little Symphony. Mercury set DM 6, two 10-inch discs, price \$2.75.

▲ These two works deserve consideration together. Cimarosa (1749-1801) was a gifted composer of opera buffa, and his *Secret Marriage* is still regarded as a landmark in the history of such music. Except for the reflective introduction, the overture is good-humored and melodically graceful. The delicacy of the orchestral coloring, deftly handled in the present performance, shows refinement of style, and were it mated with more fervor and intensity the overture would have been worthy of Mozart. The same delicacy of instrumental coloring prevails in the concerto, a lesser but nonetheless charming opus. One suspects that Arthur Benjamin has used a free hand in his arrangement, seemingly all to the good. The opening *Introduction* has dignity, the quick movements a naive liveliness, and the slow movement — a siciliano — winning poetic wistfulness. The latter is the heart of the work.

In December 1943, English Columbia issued a recording of this concerto by Eugene Goossens and the Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra (discs DX-1137/38). Goossen's performance is admirable for its tonal loveliness and poise, but lacking in the intensity and variety of coloring of Mitchell Miller's. Too, the recording in the present set gives greater character to the solo instrument. The playing of the Sidenburg Little Symphony is more discreet than inspired and its body of strings rather thin on occasion. No one who admires the oboe, as a solo instrument, and assuredly no one who admires Mitchell Miller, as a soloist, will want to pass-up this set. The recording tends to an almost unnatural brightness but with judicious hand-

ling of controls it can be made to sound satisfactory.

The recording of the overture offers no problems, yet a reduction of bass may be necessary on some machines. The orchestral sound is consistently good though obviously not extended range.

—P.H.R.

DEBUSSY: *Prelude a l'Après-Midi d'un Faune* (Eclogue pour orchestre, d'après Mallarmé); Philadelphia Orchestra, conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia disc 12917-D, price \$1.25.

▲Debussy's poetic tone picture, irrevocably ruined for many by the assiduous ministrations of undermanned, out-of-tune ballet orchestras, has always been well represented on records. Until the Beecham-London Philharmonic version (Columbia 69600-D) was released here in the summer of 1939, Walter Straram's sensitive reading was the best available. Several more recent efforts have approached Beecham's — notably Stokowski's — yet the English batonist's refined, imaginative approach to the nuances

of mood and coloring indicated by the composer was so successful that his disc has been standard for close to a decade.

This new release presents a severe challenge. The much-vaunted Philadelphia tone has been opulently set forth, with the individual artistry of William Kincaid (flute), Marcel Tabuteau (oboe), and Ralph MacLane (clarinet) overshadowing the conductor's contribution. This is not to belittle Ormandy, who has done a fine job of molding orchestral contours and adjusting instrumental balances for optimum lushness.

—A.W.P.

LECOCQ (arr. Mohaupt): *Mlle. Angot Suite*; The Philharmonic-Symphony Orchestra of New York, conducted by Efrem Kurtz. Columbia set MX-305, two discs, price \$3.50, or Microgroove disc ML4083, price \$4.85.

▲In his time, Charles Lecocq was regarded as a more polished composer in the comic opera field than Offenbach. But Lecocq had better luck with his productions. His most sensational hit was *La Fille de Mme. Angot*

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which ran for over 500 performances in 1873/74 in Paris. His music, sparkling, gay and spirited and quite as diverting as Offenbach, is deservant of revival as this suite of dances from *Mlle. Angot* proves. Though Lecocq is represented by quite a few recordings in European catalogues, these are not listed by record encyclopedists.

The present suite, comprising a short Overture, Waltz, March, Polka, Gavotte, Grand Waltz, and Can-Can, is ingeniously arranged though there are some suggestions of orchestral pretentiousness. The performance of this music is consistently boisterous and hard-driven. It is all very breath-taking with the realistic reproduction, but one feels that some of Lecocq's melodies deserved more gentle treatment.

The long-playing version is coupled with the Suite from Kabalevsky's *The Comedians*.

—P.G.

LISZT (arr. Herbert): *Liebestraum No. 3*; and DVORAK: *Slavonic Dance in G minor, Op. 45, No. 8*; Boston "Pops" Orchestra, conducted by Arthur Fiedler. Victor disc 12-0581, price \$1.25.

▲The Liszt sustains interest in Victor Herbert's arrangement, which Fiedler performs without sentimental stress. The Dvorak is a Furiant, a dance with "alternating rhythms and changing accentuation". Already familiar in a number of recordings (it was included in the recent Szell set) Fiedler gives it a healthy workout which is enhanced by the clear, bright recording. One questions the wisdom of coupling these two pieces, but Liszt and Dvorak make no stranger bedfellows than a lot of others paired on records.

—P.G.

MENDELSSOHN: *Symphony in A major, Op. 90 (Italian)*; The Boston Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Serge Koussevitzky. Victor set DM-1259, four discs, price \$6.00 (manual \$7.00).

Among the many things accomplished by Koussevitzky for the phonograph, his earlier (1936) recording of this symphony has long been the preferred reading. It excels all others in its volatility, its sparkle and executive finesse. As a recording, it is still a remarkable achievement and, despite some opinions to the contrary, it was not displaced by a recent FFRR release. It has always

been a source for regret that the 1942 set made by Beecham and the N. Y. Philharmonic was coarse in reproductive quality, for there are aspects of Beecham's reading which remain laudable. There is more purposeful equality in his balance between the wind instruments and the strings. Among other things, I particularly like his emphasis of the bass in the second movement. The 1942 pressing of the Beecham set was on war material which did not do justice to any concerned in the recording. A more recent pressing proves less offending, but the playing of the Philharmonic Symphony is hardly on a par with the Boston Orchestra.

This set is no mere duplication, for Koussevitzky has bettered his earlier performance by pointing up details formerly either not accentuated by him or else submerged in the recording. Too, the conductor adopts a more judicious pace in the second movement giving it freer momentum. The reproduction is more refined than the earlier version, its dynamic gradations being more subtle on the soft side, in view of which quieter surfaces would have been welcome. Curiously, the new set does not have the climactic impact or force of the older one, which may leave some listeners unwilling to consider it as a replacement.

—P.H.R.

#### MUSIC FROM THE 18th CENTURY:

*Overture to Nina o la pazzia d'amore* (Paisiello); *Amaryllis Suite — Scherzo* (Handel-Beecham); *Symphony No. 27 in G, K. 109* (Mozart); *Overture to Les deux Aveugles de Tolède* (Mehul); Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Victor set DM-1264, four discs, price \$6.00 (manual \$7.00).

▲The music in this album is an antidote for depressed spirits. Sir Thomas relates a delightful tale in his book, *A Mingled Chime*, of how the first selection in this set saved the day for him at Rome. For the first of a group of concerts he was giving at the Augusto, back in the days before World War I, the conductor tells us "I had selected a program of ancient and modern music in more or less equal parts . . . things went smoothly until we reached the *Paris of Delius*", then pandemonium broke loose. Later, after the uproar ceased, Sir Thomas continues "I returned to play the little overture of Paisiello's *Nina o la pazzia d'*



*Amore*, whose artful simplicity enchanted both sides of the house and saved the situation".

Paisiello (1741-1816) was a popular operatic composer in his time. Even today his melodic simplicity and grace retain charm and freshness as many of us know who are familiar with his gay overture to *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* (Victor disc 12519) and the arias from *La Molinara*, sung by Pinza (Victor disc 17915), and from *La Zingarella*, sung by Supervia (Parlophone RO20305). The leading role of *Nina o la pazza d'amore* (the title is incorrect on the record label) was a favorite of the famous dramatic soprano, Giuditta Pasta (1798-1865). This overture proves a welcome addition to the slim recorded excerpts from this forgotten 18th-century composer. Here, we are introduced to the gentle tenderness of mood for which he was praised in his time. The Handel excerpt, which derives from the opera *Rodrigo*, comes from a suite that Sir Thomas devised from music of that composer. The sample has a piquancy which wets our appetite for more of this suite.

To many the early symphony of Mozart will be the chief attraction of this concert, for it is an ingratiatingly spontaneous composition. Written in Mozart's nineteenth

year after a visit to Italy, it reflects the spirit, style and melodic impulsiveness of the Italians though many of its dancelike rhythms derive from Vienna. Even its *Andante gracioso* draws more than its Italian title from that country in its poetic grace. True, there are suggestions of Haydn but these are fleeting. Here we have a refreshing example of Mozartean alertness and youthful ardor, happily brought to life by a performance which is both vital and deftly nuanced.

Méhul (1763-1817) is best remembered today for his Biblical opera *Joseph*, from which comes the tenor aria *Champs paternels*. The latter has been recorded by McCormack, Tauber and Thill, the last being superbly sung and well worth acquiring (Columbia disc 4126-M or LF22). The influence of Gluck is traceable in the overture which Sir Thomas plays in this set. There is a refinement of sentiment in its melodic content, but its best pages are those in which dramatic fervor prevails.

Altogether, this is a splendid concert which owes its enjoyment as much to the spirited vehemence and cultural finesse of Sir Thomas as to the creative incentive of the composers. The recording is both realistic and well balanced.

—P.H.R.



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RESPIGHI: *Old Dances and Arias for the Lute, Suite No. 1*; EIAR Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sergio Failoni. Cetra imported discs BB-25017/18, in abluum (manual only), price \$6.00.

▲ Respighi, who was a keen student and editor of the older classics, created some wholly delightful orchestral suites from music by Italian and French lutenists of the 16th and 17th centuries. There is a gentle, uninhibited flow of song and an ease of invention in the various pieces comprising these works. Moreover, Respighi's treatment suggests artistic deference to the character of the music. His color palette is never excessive but discreetly employed to point up harmonic characteristics appropriate to the period. Those who know the recordings of Suites 2 and 3 will need no inducement to acquire this set. It is music belonging to a world less pretentious and self-conscious than our own, rewarding in its rhythmic grace and poetic serenity.

Only two of the four pieces of this suite — the Gagliarda and Villanella — were previously recorded, sometime around 1928. The reproduction was far from satisfactory, and the discs never enjoyed a wide sale. The Gagliard, an old French dance termed the precursor of the Minuet, was a form favored by early composers for its spirited gaiety. The present attractive example is by Vincenzo Galilei, a talented 16th-century Italian lutenist. The Villanella, deriving from an Italian folk-song pattern of the 16th century, is by an unknown composer. This is music of poetic reflection possessing considerable charm. There is an old world courtesy and stateliness to the Ballet Suite by the 17th-century composer, Simone Molinaro, and a communicable impetuosity of spirit to the final Passamezzo e mascherade (an old Italian dance in double time) by an unknown composer.

The performance and recording of this suite are praiseworthy. I believe domestic Cetra intends to repress this music in automatic sequence later.

—P.H.R.

SIBELIUS: *The Swan of Tuonela, Op. 22*; Leopold Stokowski and his Symphony Orchestra with Mitchell Miller (English Horn). Victor disc 12-0585, price \$1.25.

▲ I had occasion to discuss this work and its several recordings in the May 1948 issue (see

page 274). Each has its own attributes but none quite the magic of mood or the consistent beauty of tone of the present record. Mitchell Miller's playing is unusually sensitive in its tonal coloring and throughout more consistently receptive to the composer's directions than any other. Stokowski handles the orchestra with perception and care, leaving the spotlight rightfully focused on the song of the swan. There is no question in my mind that this disc will take precedence over all others, for it offers finer recording quality mated to rare artistry.

—P.H.R.

STRAUSS: *Also Sprach Zarathustra, Op. 30* (9 sides); and WAGNER: *Tristan and Isolde — Prelude to Act III* (1 side); Chicago Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Artur Rodzinski. Victor set DM-1258, price \$7.25 (manual \$8.25).

▲ Back in 1935, Victor issued the now famous Koussevitzky — Boston Symphony version of this Strauss score (set 257), regarded as a startlingly realistic recording for its time. I wonder how many listeners will be inclined to give up that old set in favor of this new one. True, the reproduction here is extraordinarily clear in texture and its dynamics are considerably more refined, but the climaxes are tame in comparison with the older recording. It is inevitable that this set will be compared with Columbia's 1940 issue by the late Frederick Stock and the Chicago Symphony (album 421), which is far less satisfactorily recorded. From the standpoint of engineering, the present release is a marked advance — a more faithful projection of the quality and character of its orchestra. From the interpretative side, Stock shows the greater insight into this music, especially in its transitions of mood. Rodzinski's reading is disappointing, being cautious and apathetic. There is little feeling for the dramatic sections after the opening. Of the three conductors, Koussevitzky is the most energetic and compelling, while Stock reveals the keenest penetration of the overall design. The orchestral playing in this new set is admirable for its finesse but one asks for more than this in a work of its kind. Though Strauss' elaborate polyphony is clarified throughout, the thematic material intended to be pointed up is given no emphasis with the result that the performance

seems overlong and tedious. This feeling is sustained by the waste of record material, several sides are barely half filled. One suspects with more judiciously chosen breaks the work could have been fitted to seven sides.

Around the opening of the century, *Zarathustra* was regarded as too thoughtful for its own good, and the one tone poem of Strauss which would fade the soonest. In selecting the abstruse philosophy of Nietzsche's Zarathustra as a subject for a tone poem (surely one of the most difficult ever attempted by a composer) Strauss sought to translate into music a program whose intellectual aspects proved unproductive to a satisfying continuity of design. For all its sumptuous orchestration, its moments of

nobility, *Zarathustra* fails to sustain interest in comparable manner to *Till*, *Don Juan* and *Don Quichotte*. The details of its philosophical story are too involved, though there are those who contend they are not needed for enjoyment of the music. However, even accepting the viewpoint of the English critic, Neville Cardus, that Strauss changed Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* into a novel of adventure, when the adventure turns out to mainly a few striking orchestral effects interest is not sustained.

There is more to be said for Rodzinski's carefully played traversal of the *Tristan* music, though it too is hardly cogent treatment of the music.

—P.H.R.

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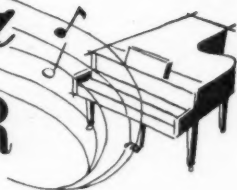
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## Long-Playing Records

▲ Columbia's has accomplished a wonderful job in its long-playing version (discs ML-076/77) of its Metropolitan Opera performance of *La Bohème*. The Microgroove version supercedes the 78 r.p.m. issue by virtue of its greater tonal liveness. Apparently, in re-recording this set the Columbia engineers found a way to add more resonance to the reproduction. The division of the opera finds Act I on one side and part of the next, Act II fills out the rest of side 2, while Acts III and IV occupy a single face each.

The Metropolitan performance of *Hansel and Gretel* has also been effectively transferred to two long-playing discs (ML-4078/79). Here the division is not quite so successful, as all the acts have to be interrupted. Act I takes one and a quarter faces, Act II the better part of the second side and a portion of the third, while Act III occupies the rest of the spacing.

While it can be said the engineers have done a creditable job on most of the long-playing records issued to date, it should be observed that one familiar with the original 78 r.p.m. versions often finds slight reminders of original breaks. It is apparent that every effort is being made to retain the quality throughout the long-playing disc and this is borne out in the most recent issues. Columbia informs us it aims to release, along with the regular 78 r.p.m. recordings, long-playing versions of all important sets. Here is a list of the latest Microgroove discs which has come our way:

- Brahms: *Symphony No. 2*; Rodzinski and the Philharmonic-Symphony of N. Y. Disc ML-4068.
- Beethoven: *Piano Concerto No. 4*; Casadesus and the Philadelphia Orch., Ormandy conducting. Disc ML-4074.
- Mozart: *Piano Quartets Nos. 1 and 2*; George Szell and members of the Budapest Quartet. Disc ML-4080.
- Dickens: *A Christmas Carol*; Basil Rathbone with supporting cast. Disc ML-4081.

*Carnival Tropicana*; Kostelanetz and his Orch. Disc ML-4082.

Kabalevsky: *The Comedians — Suite*; and

Lecocq: *Mlle. Angot — Suite*; Kurtz and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orch. of N. Y. Disc ML-4083.

Liszt: *Sonata in B minor*, and Piano Music—*Concert Etude in F mi.*; *Funérailles*; *Liebestraum No. 3*; *Hungarian Rhapsody No. 15*; Gyorgy Sandor. Disc ML-4084.

Beethoven: *Symphony No. 2*; Reiner and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orch. Disc ML-4085.

*Repeat Performance*; Lily Pons, with orch. conducted by Kostelanetz. Disc ML-4087.

Brahms: *Symphony No. 3*; Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orch. Disc ML-4088.

Rimsky-Korsakow: *Sheherazade*; Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orch. Disc ML-4089.

Ravel: *Quartet in F major*; Budapest String Quartet. Disc ML-4091.

Stravinsky: *Le Sacre du Printemps*; Philharmonic-Symphony of New York, conducted by the composer. Disc ML-4092.

Schubert: *Symphony No. 7 in C major*; Bruno Walter and the Philharmonic-Symphony Orch. of N. Y. Disc ML-4093.

*I Can Hear It Now*; Narration by Edward R. Murrow. Disc ML-4095.

It can be asumed that some of the older releases have proved popular with the record-buying public. For our own part, we are not willing to give up preferred performances in favor of some of these long-playing versions. Rodzinski's Brahms was the newest in the Columbia catalogue but it does not measure up to the Weingartner in performance. I am sure many join me in hoping that Columbia will make available some of Weingartner's older sets. The Casadesus-Ormandy rendition of the Beethoven *Fourth Concerto* has attributes which recommend it in this re-release. The two Mozart *Piano Quartets* are almost a "must" for buyers of Microgroove discs; the reproduction of the second is markedly better. I am not too sure that a long story, like Dicken's *A Christmas Carol* can sustain the interest of young children. There is something to be said for the breaks in the 78 r.p.m. version. The Kostelanetz South American tour is one of his best sets, packing quite a wallop. You cannot go wrong on the Kabalevsky and the Lecocq for light diversion. I, for one, welcome the Sandor



record, because I admire his brilliant performances of the Liszt music. If Reiner's Beethoven *Second Symphony* is not my preferred performance, I shall be urged to keep this disc, for the interpretation is a particularly live one. The Pons and Kostelanetz will please their admirers. I cannot say I enjoy the soprano's singing in this record. The Ormandy Brahms is better than the Ormandy Rimsky-Korsakow. The Ravel of the Budapest tends to make the composer sound a bit like Brahms but the playing is vital and the reproduction unusually good. For my money, the Stravinsky version of *Le Sacre* on one disc is preferred, and the Walter performance of the Schubert should prove a most welcome long-playing release.

A number of popular recordings have also been released. For information on these we recommend those interested to their dealer. Many readers have written us that they do not care for popular music on long-playing discs, as not all the selections are of equal appeal and worth. We are in agreement with this contention. It is more desirable to arrange one's own preferences in a popular program, and this can be better accomplished with 78 r.p.m. discs.



**BEETHOVEN:** *Concerto for Piano and Orchestra in E flat major* (1784); Orazio Frugoni (piano) with the Pro Musica Chamber Orchestra, conducted by Paul Paray. Vox-Polydor set 647, three discs, price \$7.00.

▲ This concerto, written in Beethoven's fourteenth year, shows marked talent in the writing for the keyboard instrument. The young composer pursues the courteous character of the 18th century, which in itself is quite remarkable for a youth of his provincial background, though scarcely suggesting the innovations which later he was to bring to the concerto form. The opening movement is hardly in the true sonata form, though unquestionably the young composer made an attempt to wrestle with it. The drama is far from convincing, and at times, as the annotator points out, anticlimactic. The *Larghetto* is by far the best section of the

composition, revealing a questing effort for deeper dramatic implication. It hardly foreshadows the later Beethoven, though it conveys an unusual emotional depth for so young a composer. The finale, while aiming to be a rondo, tends to an indefiniteness of pattern. Its elation suggests no true inner urge.

This concerto is hardly mentioned by the composer's biographers. Only the piano part has come down to us with some indications for the orchestral scoring. The job of reconstruction seems to be a judicious one.

The performance — a highly competent one — definitely makes for enjoyment of the work as a whole. The Swiss-Italian pianist Frugoni is gifted with fluent technique and ingratiating tone, and Paray's orchestral accompaniment is both vital and expressive. Moreover, the recording is admirable for its lifelike clarity of tone and balance, and the surfaces smooth. —P.H.R.

**MOZART:** *Concerto in D major, K. 218*; Jascha Heifetz (violin) and the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham. Victor set DM-1267, three discs, price \$4.75 (manual \$5.75).

▲ There is a sort of rhapsodic animation to this whole concerto and, as Tovey says, it shows the style of Mozart's adolescence at its wittiest. From the opening bars we have youthful exhilaration and healthy vigor, blended with manly grace. Though the *Andante cantabile* owns a stately calm, it nonetheless sparkles, and the final rondeau fancifully intersperses dancelike episodes with the usual more rapid sections.

It hardly seems possible that the Szigeti-Beecham rendition of the score (Columbia set 224) dates back to 1935. Having long

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appreciated that performance, I reluctantly admit that modern engineering has bettered it. There is a lifelike beauty of tone to this recording which, on extended-range equipment, gives the impression of opening a door on a concert hall. But, just as an older and less clear photograph often sustains it appeal over a modern one, so that older recording holds its power over this newer issue. For the Szigeti-Beecham performance, which has been rightfully hailed as a landmark in recorded literature, reveals an artistic compatibility in the shaping of melodic expression, which is not as markedly apparent in the present performance. While Heifetz plays with beauty of tone and finesse, he does not point up the wit in the manner of Szigeti, and not infrequently in the melodic repartée between the solo instrument and the orchestra the shaping of the phrase varies. But this is Heifetz's show, and no one can deny the superb demonstration of his musicianship; there is a true "Elysian calm" to his playing in the slow movement and throughout the work an unexcelled technical polish. Whether those who own the older set will be minded to replace it with this new one remains a moot question. The listener who values realistic reproduction above all things will naturally be drawn to it, and in the end, let it be truthfully said, find just cause for enjoyment of Mozart's music as well as its performance. —P.H.R.

**TCHAIKOVSKY:** *Concerto in B flat minor*; **RACHMANINOFF:** *Prelude in G major* (Op. 32, No. 5); Oscar Levant (piano), with the Philadelphia Orchestra conducted by Eugene Ormandy. Columbia set MM-785, five discs, price \$7.25. Also Long-Playing disc ML-4096, price \$4.85.

▲ This is one of the Levant sets, admittedly not many in number, that is entitled to serious consideration. It is the best thing he has done on records; here the qualities of the music seem to match his emotional outlook. After which it may be something of an anticlimax to state that it is not the best version available, but after all Levant is in direct competition with Messrs. Rubinstein, Horowitz and Petri, to mention three; and not even his most fervent admirers would claim that he is in *that* category.

Levant has the notes well under control, and in some places his technical accomplishment is of a really high order. He has a bad

habit of arpeggiating chords not written as arpeggios: his jazz background comes to the fore here, and perhaps he does it unconsciously. Otherwise there is more Tchaikovsky than Levant, which is as it should be. (In the Horowitz-Toscanini version, there is more Horowitz than Tchaikovsky.) In the last movement, some of Levant's articulation is worthy of note. He would, of course, try to speed up the final octaves, which results in a beautiful blur. But, then again, Horowitz also played them too fast, so there is distinguished precedent.

The recording is good, as Philadelphia Orchestra recordings generally are, and Ormandy's accompaniment is well integrated, as it generally is. Thus, despite a few reservations concerning lack of subtlety, traces of poor taste, and some occasional pushing, I can recommend the set as one which is close enough to the spirit of the music. The very old Rubinstein, to my mind, still remains the best, dated as the recording is; the more recent Rubinstein is exciting enough, but a little too out of balance with the orchestra for best results. Horowitz's version, of course, is merely a *tour de force* that contains a few wonderful things but only a coincidental relation with Tchaikovsky.

—H.C.S.



**BEETHOVEN:** *Sonata in D major, Op. 12, No. 1* and *Sonata in A major, Op. 12, No. 2*; Jascha Heifetz (violin) and Emanuel Bay (piano). Victor set DM-1254, four discs, price \$6.00 (manual \$7.00).

▲ Heifetz previously recorded the *E flat Sonata, Op. 12, No. 3* (Victor 852), investing it with appreciable tonal beauty and polish. The subdued reproduction of Mr. Bay's piano part, however, made the performance too one-sided. In these works, Bay becomes an equal partner and the results are far more satisfactory. Heifetz's playing is up to his best standards; there is the usual tonal luster and stylistic finesse, though the emotion is rather phlegmatic. Bay seems more cognizant of the need for bursts of vitality when the music suggests the young composer stretching his muscles. It is he who, in the

opening movements of both works supplies the required energy. In the more suave moments, the violinist is wholly persuasive in the manner of the well-bred musician.

In the three sonatas comprising *Op. 12*, Beethoven followed in the footsteps of his predecessors revealing only occasional glimpses of his growing genius and later forcefulness. Especially revealing of the young composer's growing artfulness are the craftsmanship of the opening movement of the *A major* and the pathos of its andante.

—J.N.

**BRAHMS:** *Quartet for Piano and Strings in C Minor, Opus 60*; Mieczyslaw Horszowski (piano), Alexander Schneider (violin) Milton Katims (viola) Frank Miller (cello), Mercury Album DM-9; four 12" discs, \$6.75.

▲Excellent performance of a work that has never quite caught the fancy of audiences, here or in Europe. Tovey, who regards the quartet highly, feels that its genuinely tragic finale keeps it from public favor, even though it is the only logical conclusion of the whole design. Pure tragedy, he feels, as understood and beloved by the Greeks and Elizabethans, is beyond our powers of assimilation today.

This Quartet, Brahms' third and last in this form, dates from the years in which the *First Symphony* was being painfully nourished into being. Some of the murky turbulence of the latter work finds its way into the music, and some of the incandescent nobility as well. There is also kinship between the sublime andante of the symphony and the romantic, songlike slow movement of the quartet. The scherzo of the quartet is a powerful, ill-tempered piece reminiscent of some early piano works.

Previous recordings of this music have been unavailable for some time. I treasure an old National Gramophone Society recording for the strong pianism of Olive Bloom. An ancient Columbia set with Harry Cumpson was faint even for its vintage, and rhythmically stolid. The balance of elements on this new set is eminently satisfactory. Horszowski's long experience as Casals' accompanist has created in him an ensemble musician of high rank. Unfortunately, reproduction has that metallic, shrill quality of all domestic Mercury recording, and sounds well on my machine, only with the treble turned down. Surfaces

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are also a trial, and the records seem excessively brittle. Mercury is developing an excellent catalog, and it seems a shame to defeat its purpose through quality such as this. —A.R.

**RACHMANINOFF:** *Sonata in G minor, Op. 19*; Efrem Kurtz (cello) and William Kapell (piano). Victor set DM-1261, four discs, \$6.00 (manual \$7.00).

▲ This sonata dates from 1901, the same year that produced Rachmaninoff's popular second piano concerto, and it follows that work in the chronology of his opus numbers. Fine pianist that he was, the composer has been accused of allowing his own virtuosity to throw the balance in this sonata, yet he has created a work of lasting appeal because in it the cello does the thing it always does best — it sings. One after the other the broad and appealing melodies develop, melodies of the kind that made his concertos and symphonies so popular. Felix Salmond, so the program notes in the album liner tell us, called the *Andante* movement "one of the most beautiful in all cello literature." Its melodic lines are song of the purest kind. It is amusing to note that, though the composer's style is certainly individual enough, there is more than a slight reminder of Chopin in the piano part of this *Andante*, while there are passages in the first movement recalling certain pages of Brahms.

If the sonata has a real fault it must be its perhaps too ready accessibility, or possibly its frank romanticism. And if this new recording lacks anything of a full realization of the music's possibilities, this is due to a certain "statuesque" quality in the playing of the cellist. The tone is lovely, admirable in its reserve, but it hardly matches the composer's passion. To some this may seem a virtue, but I think most listeners would like to be more deeply stirred. Young Mr. Kapell proves himself an excellent partner for the cellist: his playing is clean and musical, if never genuinely exciting. The balance between the instruments is particularly good in this set. The combination is not an easy one to reproduce, and past recordings have usually suffered by the roundness of the cello tone quite swamping the piano. Nothing of the sort happens in this life-like reproduction.

In 1935 Columbia issued this work in a performance, much admired at the time, by Marcel Hubert and Shura Cherkassky. That set has been for some time withdrawn. If there was more fire in the playing of those gentlemen, they had nothing like such fine recording as Kurtz and Kapell. —P.L.M.

**SHOSTAKOVICH:** *String Quartet No. 3*; Fine Arts Quartet. Mercury set DM-3, four discs, price \$5.00.

▲ Much of the musical substance of this quartet is closely akin to the composer's *Ninth Symphony*. In five movements, the mood of all except the slow section and the finale is brash and flippant. The annotator points out that the composer is "preoccupied with tones and chords a halfstep apart, and it is on this basis that the present quartet is built." This is all very interesting from a technical standpoint but when inspiration does not surmount technicality it is apt to disappoint. Much of this work remains run-of-the-mill Shostakovich, a repetition of what we have heard before. Not until we come to the long slow movement (three sides) do we sit back comfortably in our seats and feel the composer is speaking to us earnestly and forcefully with something more than his head guiding his pen. This adagio has its disturbing elements, but these are purely emotional ones. The short finale, which follows, is quite simple after the drama preceding it, offering a more persuasive handling of the halfstep relationship. Only in the slow movement and the finale does the composer's preoccupation with the medium of the string quartet seem justified to me. Much of the tongue-in-the-cheek writing in the opening movement and the two marches which follow would have been better served by wind instruments. The symphonic characteristics of the third movement is rightfully alluded to by the annotator.

The Fine Arts Quartet is an excellent organization, well coordinated and disciplined in its playing. One welcomes a recording by this group, long familiar for its fine performances on the radio via the American Broadcasting System. Though it is deservant that the ensemble should have recorded this quartet, inasmuch as it gave the first performance on the air in 1947, I, for one, could have appreciated their talent in other music. The reproduction is both resonant

and well balanced though tending to some shrillness. This can be mitigated by stepping up the bass and, if necessary, reducing the treble. —P.H.R.



**BEETHOVEN:** *Thirty-three Variations on a Theme by Diabelli, Op. 120*; Leonard Shure (piano). Vox set 636, seven discs, price \$9.75.

▲ There is only one work that seriously challenges this one — Bach's *Goldberg Variations*. Tovey calls this composition "the greatest set of variations ever written". Like the former, the *Diabelli* is music with which to live intimately and to commune, for this veritable "musical Cosmos" does not yield all its wonder in casual listening. This opus belongs to the period of the composer's advanced sketching for the *Ninth Symphony*, "a fact which gives the greater significance to the extraordinary impulse that led him to throw off thus suddenly one of the three most enormous compositions ever written for a single instrument" (Tovey). Its history is a curious one. Diabelli, a successful music publisher, having written in the winter of 1822-23 a banal waltz, invited a group of composers to contribute one variation each on his piece. Schaufüller, in his excellent book on the composer, contributes some interesting comments on Beethoven and on Diabelli. He tells us that "Beethoven growled that he never collaborated; besides, he didn't want to write a variation on a cobbler's patch (*Schusterfleck*). Then he looked at the foolish thing again, burst into a great laugh and straightway fell to composing. It may have tickled his sense of humor that the tune was so much like the *scherzo* of a trio in E flat which he had written at the age of fifteen and never published". Paranthetically, Schaufüller adds: "It is worth noting that when this work was published in 1830, Diabelli was one of three old friends of Beethoven's to sign a guarantee of its authenticity. Perhaps he had based his own tune upon its *scherzo*."

From this ridiculous little waltz tune, as it has been called, came an incredibly resourceful work. It is not possible to write at length upon this music, for not yet —

even after several years of acquaintance — have we unlocked the doors to all its many wonders. No listener who knows and admires the *Goldberg Variations* should deny himself the wealth of musical pleasure of this extraordinary composition. Many listeners unquestionably know the performance by Schnabel (English Society release) issued some years ago. To compare the two sets side by side is a task for someone more intimate with the music than the present writer. Shure's rendition suggests years of preparation and extensive work and shows him as an unusually gifted artist. He has the technical fluency and emotional intensity to dissipate memories of the older artist. Moreover, the fact that his playing has been better recorded adds to one's enjoyment of his performance.

His is music-making of the highest order, deserving the attention and respect of all serious music lovers, and assuredly a most worthy contribution to the literature of Beethoven on records. Vox deserves to be congratulated for its courage and foresight in making available this performance by one of America's richly endowed pianists. Not only is the recording lifelike in its reproduction of the piano, but the record surfaces are gratifyingly smooth. —P.H.R.

**CHOPIN:** *Twenty-four Preludes (Op. 28)*; Artur Rubinstein (piano). Victor set M-1260, four discs, price \$6.00.

▲ What was in Chopin's mind when he composed these? The *Preludes* are unique among his output, and some (such as the second) are completely atypical. Legends about George Sand's influence in the *Preludes* are scorched by now; it has been pretty well established that some of them were written

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before the ill-fated excursion to Majorca (possibly including the romantic *Raindrop Prelude*, about which so many pretty stories have been made).

Chopin must have some scheme, if the arrangement of the music is any indication. He admired and played Bach; it might be that he faintly had some ideas about a new *Well-Tempered Clavier*, for the twenty-four preludes comprise each of the major and minor keys (except C sharp major). Chopin followed the circle of fifths, bracketing each major with its relative minor (thus the first six are C, A minor, G, E minor, D, B minor; and so on to the last six: E flat, C minor, B flat, G minor, F, D minor). Biographers are pretty silent about this point. Perhaps some new research would throw light on the subject.

Since the Cortot recording dated from the early 30's, Victor needed a replacement. Columbia has the 1942 Petri version, but that distinguished artist is a little too scholarly and aloof in this music. So now we have Rubinstein, a great pianist when he is in the mood, which he isn't, especially, here. With nothing at all to back me up, I feel that the recording was made in haste. Rubinstein sounds pressed, a little flurried, and if it turns out that this set was made in the mad rush before the Jan. 1 deadline of last year, let us hope that Rubinstein remakes it when the ban is off. Especially since 1949 will mark the centenary of Chopin's death.

Taking some of the *Preludes* individually, as Rubinstein plays them, the first is anything but the designation of "agitato." There are some mannered phrases and the approach is too heavy for this diamond chip. In the G major, the rippling left-hand part has a tendency to roar; and in the E major the pace is faster than I ever have heard it — certainly too fast for the "largo" marking. The G sharp minor is a hasty scramble, and in the B flat major Rubinstein sticks in an extra measure at the fourth before the end (probably a slip, for it is a repetition of the previous measure's bass line). The general impression of the playing is one of much more power than poetry or delicacy. Rubinstein is at his most exhibitionistic, which is fine for the *B flat Prelude* or other similar big pieces, but close to fatal in the smaller, almost impressionistic sketches. —H.C.S.

LISZT: *Sonata in B minor* played by Gyorgy Sandor (piano). Columbia set MM-786, three discs, price \$4.75.

▲The *B minor Sonata* is one of the great works of the romantic movement. It was one of the first to experiment with cyclic form, its piano writing is on a transcendental plane, and its melodic and harmonic content is still daring. There are pompous sections in the music, but along with those there are moments of real lyricism mixed with a diabolism that is frightening in the hands of a great pianist. As a great admirer of Liszt's music, I find it hard to dissociate the cheap episodes with the legitimate ones. To a certain extent there are elements of the poseur in everything Liszt ever wrote, and yet a rather tremendous musical mind underlies his whole corpus of work. That may be part of the fascination. Few composers have so revealed themselves in their music, and few are so personal.

This new recording of the sonata is in sound a little twangy and somewhat overcut, making the piano in places sound like an anvil hit by a particularly enthusiastic blacksmith. While Gyorgy Sandor is of the percussive school, he is not that percussive. On the credit side, he is a better than fair Liszt pianist, with a sizeable technic, a lot of sweep and virtuosity, and the ability to keep things moving. Although a little bleak and cold — he imitates the grand manner rather than being part of it — there is enough drive in this performance to make it a quite acceptable version. Comparing it with the Horowitz, one notes that the latter's is still a remarkably good recording if the excess bass can be eliminated. One also notes more of a connected sweep, a grand, inexorable march through the pomp and pageantry of the writing. This was one of the greatest performances on records in its time, and it remains so. Few pianists can compete on equal terms with Horowitz in this type of music, and it is to Sandor's credit that his ideas about the music have a validity and cogency of their own. —H.C.S.

SCARLATTI: *Six Sonatas*; Vladimir Horowitz (piano). Victor set MO-1262, two discs, price \$2.50.

▲Scarlatti — Domenico, not his equally famous father, Alessandro — is one of the really great men of music. He is best known



for his five hundred or so little keyboard pieces, which he designated "sonatas" (a handful of which are constantly played). Of this great number, there is not one which lacks its own specific characteristics. When we remember that Scarlatti was a contemporary of Handel, writing in a classic age where composers of keyboard music would turn out page after page of "correct" music, each sounding like the next, it is one of the miracles of music that Scarlatti consistently maintained his individuality. More than that: he is one of the supreme lyrists of music. Each of his sonatas exploits a mood, with an almost epigrammatic quality and an infallible sense of line. One never gets tired of them. In their way they are perfect, and a century or so ahead of their time.

The half-dozen played by Horowitz are: in E major (L. 27), G major (L. 209), A major (L. 483), E major (L. 25), E major (L. 430) and B minor (L. 33). The "L" refers to the Longo number, since the Longo edition remains the definitive one. In many respects these little works are well suited for this pianist, for what they require above all (technically, not interpretively) is complete independence of fingers and wrist control — two accomplishments Horowitz has been blessed with in abundance. For the most part Horowitz uses a reduced scale of dynamics, and his line generally is delightfully plastic. And, for the most part, the playing is all that could be desired — clean-cut, with a singing legato and wonderfully paced scales.

Nevertheless the professional virtuoso in Horowitz sometimes comes to the surface. After playing the G major Sonata with excellent taste he makes a minor blemish by ending with some dynamically excessive fortes. And all through the one in E (L. 25), we are given a mighty exhibition of bravura playing which is, for what it is, exciting; but whatever it is, it isn't Scarlatti. Taken on the whole, though, the set is one to be acquired by those who want to investigate — or already know — one of the first flushes of romanticism in music. —H.C.S.

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CATALANI: *La Wally* — *M'hai salvato, hai voluto obilar l'offesa*; and DONIZETTI: *Lucrezia Borgia* — *Di pescatore ignobile*; Paolo Civil (tenor), with Maria Vinciguerra (soprano) in *La Wally*, with Orchestra Sinfonia dell'EIAR, conducted by Ugo Tansini. Imported Cetra disc CC2322, price \$2.50.

PUCCINI: *La Boheme* — *O soave fanciulla, and Sono andati*; Onelia Fineschi (soprano) and Francisco Albanese (tenor) with Italian Radio Symphony Orch., conducted by Arturo Basile. Imported Cetra disc BB-2510, price \$2.50.

PUCCINI: *Manon Lescaut* — *Donna non vidi mai*; and ALFANO: *Resurrezione* — *Piangi*; Giacinto Prandelli (tenor) with Italian Radio Orch., conducted by Arturo Basile. Imported Cetra 10-inch disc, TI7049, price \$1.50.

▲Civil is a competent though hardly imaginative artist, who compresses his voice too much. Vinciguerra tends to emotional over-indulgence, but her singing is, on the whole, freer. The duet from *La Wally*, an unfamiliar opera to most Americans, is highly dramatic and has to do with the reunion of the lovers high on a mountain amid snow and ice. Earlier in the opera, Hagenbach (the tenor) bets he can dance with

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Wally and steal a kiss, which he does. Finding out about the bet, she turns away from him. Seeking her out on the mountain in the end, he tells her that the kiss in the dance, she thought an insult, was his declaration of love. Like so many operas, *La Wally* ends tragically; an avalanche overwhelms her lover and Wally commits suicide. The Donizetti aria, of lesser consequence, should be sung with more lyrical freedom to impress.

The Neapolitan tenor, Albanese, is a more gifted singer. His is a warm-hued, lyric tenor well suited to the role of Roldolfo. His partner, Fineschi, makes an appealing Mimi, though some of her singing is marred by too much vibrato. Her upper voice, on the whole, is quite lovely. She does her best work in the duet from the last act which ends all too abruptly. There is youthful elation in the rendition of the first act duet which will undoubtedly please many listeners.

Prandelli, a newcomer and unquestionably a young artist, has true sensuous beauty to his voice. His *Donna non vidi mai* is well sung, but the more dramatic Alfano aria finds him tonally less steady, though the voice has a definite appeal. The orchestral accompaniments and recording are praiseworthy. —P.H.R.

DUNHILL: *To the Queen of Heaven*; and MacGIMSEY: *Sweet Little Jesus Boy*; Carol Brice (contralto) with Jonathan Brice at the piano. Columbia 10-inch disc 17559-D, price \$1.00.

▲There is simplicity and reverence in Miss Brice's delivery of these two songs, though her tendency to stress chest tones makes her upper voice often sound thin in comparison. The Dunhill, a setting of an old English poem, is a fine song well worth acquiring, recalling his sensitive setting of Yeats' *The Clothes of Heaven*. Miss Brice indulges in too much portamento for my taste, though it would be hard to spoil a song like this. MacGimsey's simulated spiritual, a bit on the sentimental side, is not without appeal, but hardly in the class of the Dunhill. The late John McCormack left us a fine recording of that composer's *The Clothes of Heaven*, which Victor once issued on a black label disc (26705). As the latter is withdrawn, I recommend the interested reader acquire the English pressing (H.M.V. DA1851), for it

offers a rare example of the famous Irish tenor's poised artistry.

Jonathan Brice, the singer's brother proves himself a competent accompanist, and the recording though without much resonance is good. —J.N.

MONTEVERDI: *Arianna — Lamento d' Arianna* (2 sides); VERDI: *Un Ballo in Maschera — Morro ma prima in grazia* (1 side); WEBER: *Oberon — Piangi mio cuor (Traure, mein Herz)* (1 side); Gabriella Gatti (soprano) with orchestra, conducted by Alfredo Simonetto and Fernando Previtali. Cetra set 112 (automatic), price \$4.50.

▲Among the modern Italian singer, Mme. Gatti occupies a conspicuous place for the beauty of her voice, her musical intelligence and style. Her exceptional poise has established her in a few short years as one of the foremost interpreters of classical Italian songs and arias. Her debut took place two years before the war broke out at the Reale, Rome, where she soon established an enviable reputation for her interpretations of the heroines in *Otello*, *Der Freischuetz* and *William Tell*. In more recent years she has become the principal teacher of lieder and classical Italian songs at the Santa Cecilia Academy in Rome.

On a recent visit to England, the soprano made a number of recordings for H.M.V., among which is another version of Arianna's famous lament — the only existent part from Monteverdi's famous opera. In the latter case, she used the Respighi arrangement in which the dynamics and instrumental coloring are not in keeping with the music's period. The composer intended that the singer convey the emotional contrast and the orchestra fulfill a less conspicuous function. In the present recording, the original orchestration is employed, and as Mme. Gatti shades her voice beautifully throughout, this remains for me the most persuasive performance. This music, so deeply moving with its passionate restraint, is a lyrical threnody of nobility and power, which rightfully has been marked as the forerunner of Dido's lament by Henry Purcell.

While Mme. Gatti sings Amelia's tragic aria from *The Masked Ball* with poised artistry and expressive tonal coloring, her emotional intensity is less convincing than others

before her who have recorded it, notably Rethberg. The unfamiliar air from von Weber's *Oberon* proves more suitable to the soprano's temperament, and here her artistic equanimity is most satisfying. "Mourn thou, poor heart," sings Rezia, who is a captive in the palace of the Emir in Tunis, "for the joys that are dead." This is a lovely aria (most welcome in this recording) in which the mood of gentle pathos is sustained with rare artistry.

Domestic Cetra's pressings, greatly preferable to the original imported records of these selections, sustain one's enjoyment of the fine recording. —P.H.R.

**MUSICA SACRA:** *Liturgical Music of the Greek Orthodox Church*, as preserved in the Italo-Albanian Colony; Liturgical School of Badia del Grottaferrata; Padre Lorenzo Tardo, director. CETRA Album 12; five discs; \$14.10.

▲The record repertory is indeed enriched by this album of exceptional historical, as well as musical value. While the literature of Roman Gregorian Chant has been well served by recordings, notably Victor's Solesmes volumes and the recent Canadian recordings, the ancient liturgies of the Eastern church, especially the Greek orthodox, have heretofore been unknown to most collectors.

There are several marked differences between this oriental music and Gregorian. Most apparent are the sinuous melodic lines, which have a strange languorous quality. There is no rhythm, as such, since bar lines and stresses are of course lacking; however, the monotony of repeated phrases often tends to give shape and form to a particular chant which we do not find in Gregorian. There is also the use of a device known as "ison", in which part of the chorus holds a sustained note, often for as much as a minute, while a solo voice or smaller group sings an extremely florid melody over this note. The dissonances occasioned by this device are quite striking, and in the later examples there is an attempt at a definite harmonic cadence of each episode of ison.

This liturgy has been most completely preserved in a group of small monasteries on the eastern coast of Italy, where a group of Greek and Albanian monks fled from Turkish persecution some years before 1000 A.D. The Abbey at Grottaferrata was founded by

Saint Nilo, who died there in 1004, and is today the religious and cultural center of the entire Italo-Albanian colony. Its school of Byzantine music has preserved its traditional liturgy through the centuries, and is today kept at its task through its enormously gifted director, Padre Tardo. It was he who persuaded Cetra to make these recordings just before the war, in order to make his music better known.

The music which Padre Tardo has chosen embraces examples of the Byzantine liturgy from the 8th through 15th centuries. It is hard, however, to find much stylistic development over the 800-year period represented: this is in some way a tribute to the zeal of the Grottaferrata monks in preserving their liturgy, and can be also a result of the geographical, as well as spiritual, isolation of the Abbey. The chorus is excellent, although individual voices are hardly of de luxe quality. Unfortunately the recording lacks the resonant atmosphere of Victor's Solesmes and Dijon recordings, but it is generally clear and well balanced. Cetra's imported surfaces are far superior to their first issues here, and the album and booklet are simple and tasteful. —A.R.

**NILES:** *The Blue Madonna*; and **TRADITIONAL** (arr. Niles): *Go 'Way from my Window*; Gladys Swarthout (mexico-soprano) with Gibner King at the piano. Victor 10-inch disc 10-1456, price \$1.00.

▲One of Miss Swarthout's most affecting performances on records is her rendition of John Jacob Niles' *I Wonder As I Wander* (Victor disc 10-1181). Apparently the singer is deeply stirred by Niles' songs, for here again she sings with considerable feeling.

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*The Blue Madonna*, derived from Spanish sources, rates a spoken introduction by the artist. Those who know and admire Miss Swarthout's earlier record of *I Wonder As I Wander* will assuredly want this companion disc, which is excellently recorded. —J.N.

**THOMSON:** *Four Saints in Three Acts* (abridged); Beatrice Robinson-Wayne (soprano); Ruby Greene (contralto); Inez Matthews (soprano); Edward Matthews (baritone); Charles Holland (tenor); David Bethea (tenor); Randolph Robinson (baritone); Altonell Hines (mezzo-soprano); Abner Dorsey (basso); with Virgil Thomson conducting double chorus and orchestra. Victor set DM-1244, five discs, \$7.25 (manual \$8.25).

▲ This first of the two Gertrude Stein-Virgil Thomson operas had its premiere in February 1934. It was hailed at the time as an unique and important work, and occasional revivals since then in concert or on the radio may be taken as an indication that it is still so considered. Recent publication of the score by Music Press, and now this abridged recording, serve to confirm this impression.

I suppose reactions to these records will vary as widely as the temperaments and tastes of their listeners. Those who saw the original production will certainly have an advantage over those who did not. One of the curious and fascinating things about the work, as I remember it from those days, was the way in which it all seemed to make a kind of sense, although one would hardly have dared attempt to analyze it. I recall especially the "Dead wed led" scene, with its very impressive cortege; it left one with the feeling that something of real importance had happened. Without the picture, and fifteen years removed from the day that produced the work, I suppose some hearers are going to be baffled — especially if they make any effort to extract a plot from the text.

On the other hand, I think it may be well to issue a word of warning against accepting Miss Stein's libretto as simply the epitome of nonsense. For those who have the background or the patience to understand it, there appears to be a very real symbolism behind her seemingly disjointed series of words. True, she was fascinated with the pure sound of language, but her art went

further than that. Listeners with analytical minds, then, are referred to Julian Sawyer's *Key to Four Saints in Three Acts*, published in the Fall 1947 issue of *The New Iconograph*. Here the religious meanings of the opera are pointed out in great detail.

As for Thomson's music, it is just exactly what such a text needs — and this accounts for the continued life of the opera. There are effects and melodies in the work which haunt the memory, but there is very little that could be called strikingly original. It is the very limitations of the musical vocabulary Thomson chooses to utilize that set off the obscurities of Miss Stein's text, and convince us, for the moment, that her words are not only logical but inevitable. An essay could probably be written on her use of something very like musical repetition and variation in words, and the necessity such practices impose upon the composer to keep his music clear, straight and not overdeveloped. Of course Thomson has put it together with great skill, but his music is important less for its own sake, than as the perfect complement for the libretto. Where a Handelian style was in order, Mr. Thomson has supplied it, and when (which is most of the time) melodies of a folk cast were indicated, he has provided them handsomely.

Fortunately for the periodical revivals, it has so far always been possible to reassemble practically the entire original cast of Negro singing actors. It was the fine seriousness of their performance, no less than their appealing voices and their outstanding musicality which put the piece over in the first place, and they all seem to maintain in each repetition the standards they set so long ago. The recording, therefore, has historic associations with the premiere, and mechanically it has inevitably benefited immeasurably by its delayed production. Generally, in matters of clarity and balance, it is admirable, though not especially notable for liveliness. Occasionally I noted slight distortion in some of the voices. —P.L.M.

**SCHUBERT:** *Der Doppelgänger, and Der Juengling und der Tod*; Marian Anderson (contralto) and Franz Rupp (piano). Victor discs 12-0580, price \$1.25.

▲ It is altogether understandable that Miss Anderson should want to sing her famous *Doppelgänger*, for it offers one of the great-

est dramatic opportunities open to the *lieder* singer. And she gives it with good tone and intelligent diction, if without ever making us feel the tragedy of "youthful haunts revisited" or the horror of the discovery that the face of the wakeful wraith is that of the protagonist himself. Indeed the most memorable thing in this performance is the piano playing of Mr Rupp, and the magnificent *crescendo* with which he leads the singer to the climax. Perhaps it is just an old-fashioned prejudice, but I still prefer this song in a man's voice. It has rarely, I think, been better done than on Kipnis' record (dating back just twenty years, to the centennial of Schubert's death) (Columbia 72057D, in M-89) though I am told Rehkemper's surpassed it (Polydor 95102). *Der Juengling und der Tod* is a more important contribution to recorded music, because the song is so little known. In reality it is a companion piece to the famous *Der Tod und das Mäedchen*; indeed the poem by Josef von Spaun is said to have been inspired by the Claudius verse. In contrast, the youth of this dialogue begs death to come; there is nothing of the terror with which Claudius' maiden cries out. Hardly a masterpiece, this is good second-string Schubert, worthy of more frequent hearing. It cannot honestly be said that Miss Anderson plumbs the depths of this little drama either, as Karl Erb did in his not too common-pre-war recording (HMV DB 4466). These excellently reproduced performances, then, must simply be set down as consolation prizes for those unable to secure the other recordings.

—P.L.M.

**THE NATIVITY:** narrated by Walter Hampden. Cast: Hester Sondergaard, Roger De Koven, Santos Ortega, Art Carney, Berry Kroeger, Maurice Ellis, William Quinn, Richard Hamilton. Music by Gordon Seaman. Story by William Slocum, Jr. Directed by Earle McGill. Victor set P-225, three 10-inch discs.

▲The ageless and wonderful story of the Nativity is told in a simple but not naive manner to appeal to old and young alike. Its form, borrowed from radio is familiar but not cheap, for the story is intelligently written, richly narrated by the golden voice and manner of Walter Hampden, and tellingly acted by experienced people. Above all, it has dignity.

The script is arranged as a series of episodes, each bridged by Mr. Hampden, as narrator. It begins with the Annunciation and ends with the Flight into Egypt. The cast are well chosen inasmuch as the timbre of their voices suggests the characters. The music, consisting mostly of carols sung by a boy's choir and organ interludes, is used effectively to point up the climaxes of each episode. The text is in modern English except for the words of the visiting angels which are direct quotations from Scripture.

It is difficult to refrain from superlatives in describing this album. Let us keep our words, then, on the same dignified level as the presentation of the story. The album is excellent — a set not just for Christmas, but for all time. Congratulations to Walter Hampden and his cast, and to Victor. —E.A.

**SHAKESPEARE:** *Hamlet—Excerpts*; Laurence Olivier with Philharmonia Orchestra, conducted by Muir Mathieson (Music by William Walton). Victor set DM-1273, three discs, price \$4.75 (manual \$5.75).

▲Those who own and admire the presentation of Shakespeare's *Henry V* of Laurence Olivier will undoubtedly want this set. We will publish a review of the present album in a subsequent issue by Robert D. Olson. Mr. Olson, at present in England working in association with the preparation of another important film, promises to write as soon as time permits.

A California reader, Mr. W. R. Moran of La Canada, writes: "Recently, the question was brought up of operas with scenes laid in Peru. There is at least one other beside

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Offenbach's *La Périchole*. It is *Lin Calle*, with book by De Nárke Mercante and music by the Argentine composer D'Esposito. I heard a performance of this work in Buenos Aires last January. There is at least one recorded excerpt: the *Ave Maria*, sung by Isabel Marengo on Victor 4557. The scene is laid in the time of the Incas.

## In The Popular Vein

by Enzo Archetti

*My Ideal* and *Moonlight In Vermont*; Margaret Whiting, with Billy Butterfield and His Orchestra. Capitol 15222.

● A beautiful couple: a mellow voice and mellow trumpet with styles that dove-tail as if they were made for each other. The two numbers are in the same tempo. *My Ideal* is more successful. Here's a combination Capitol should never break up

*In the Market Place of Old Monterey* and *On the Slow Boat To China*; Kay Kyser and His Orchestra. Vocals by Harry Babbitt and Gloria Wood. Columbia 38301

● Loesser's *Slow Boat* has swell possibilities but K.K. missed the boat because he was too satisfied to give it no more than a routine run-through. The reverse is an enemic bit of romanticizing

*Lillette* and *Tell Me, Marianne*; Jean Sablon, with Toots Camarata and His Orchestra. Victor 20-3111

● The French Sinatra comes through again with some swoony crooning. *Lillette* is light as froth. *Tell Me* is very much like, if not identical, with *Tango of the Roses*. The Chevalier-like accent is engaging. Splendid accompanying, also wonderfully smooth record material.

*Crosby Classics, Volume II*; Bing Crosby, with various orchestras. Columbia Album M-762, 4-10" discs.

● Popular singers come and go but Bing Crosby remains with good reason, for he has a smooth voice, a unique style, and a knack for picking a good tune to plug. For this album, Columbia has dug up *Let's Put Out the Lights*; *I've Got To Pass Your House*; *Did You Ever See A Dream Walking?*; *A Ghost of A Chance*; *Temptation*; *Black Moonlight*; *Sweet Georgia Brown*; and *Moonstruck*. Some show their age but all are good Crosby.

*Benny Goodman*—Peggy Lee; Benny Goodman, His Orchestra and Sextet, and Peggy Lee. Columbia Album C-170, 4-10" discs.

*Cherokee* and *Love Is Just Around the Corner*; Benny Goodman Sextet (Personnel: Benny

Goodman, clarinet; Jimmy Rowles, piano; Don Lamond, drums; Harry Barbarin, bass; Red Norvo, xylophone; Al Hendrickson, guitar). Capitol 15166.

*On the Slow Boat To China* and *I Hate To Lose You*; Benny Goodman and His Orchestra. Vocals by Emma Lou Welch and Al Hendrickson. Capitol 15208.

● A pleasant, but not sensational, album in which the Goodman-Lee styles blend nicely. The Sextet numbers are best, being more relaxed. It is doubtful that any of these records will ever make jazz history, despite occasional flashes from solist, etc.

Best number are *Where or When* and *Let's Do It*; the others are: *My Little Cousin* (in the "Yiddish" manner popularized when Ziggy Elman was with Benny); *Not Mine*; *On the Sunny Side of the Street*; *The Way You Look Tonight*; *Winter Weather*; and *Somebody Nobody Loves*.

Of the singles, the Sextet numbers are again best, being in true jazz style. Benny's treatment of Loesser's *On A Slow Boat* is disappointing. The reverse is average. Recording good all around.

*Here I'll Stay* and *Green-up Time*; Buddy Clark, with Vocal Group and Orchestra under the direction of Mitchell Ayres. Columbia 38-294.

● These are from Kurt Weill's *Love Life*, a new Broadway musical. In a higher grade than the usual show music but the music doesn't have characteristics for immediate popular hits. Buddy Clark, et al, do a very good job. Recording good.

*Danny Boy* and *Phil, the Fluter's Ball*; Dennis Day, with Orchestra. Capitol 15247. *I'd Love To Live In Loveland With a Girl Like You* and *I Love You*; Dennis Day, with Charles Dent and His Orchestra. Victor 20-3015.

● Dennis exploits two phases of his vocal art: lush sentimentalizing or comic capering, with brogue. These two discs, having samples of both, are pleasant.

*The Click Song* and *Here Comes the Milkman*; Swing and Sway with Sammy Kaye. Vocals by The Kaydets, Glee Club, and Chorus. Victor 20-3017.

● Typical Sammy Kayes. *The Click Song* is a plug for some locale, probably a nightclub. Though original in its treatment, musically it's quite trite. The reverse is a semi-comic song with sound effects. Very good recording and excellent material.

*Play the Playera* and *Lonely Rancho*; Xavier Cugat and His Orchestra. Columbia 38288.

● A slight departure for Cugat. *Lonely Rancho* is a waltz, delightfully done. *Play the Playera* is a beguine version of Granados' *Playera*. Excellent!

*Tea Leaves* and *Where Apple Blossoms Fall*; Freddie Gardner Orchestra. Vocals by Den-



ny Vaughn. Victor 20-3121.  
 ● Rather anemic bits of sentiment. Not very original, either musically or technically.

*Besome Mucho and Amor*; Andy Russell, with Al Sack and His Orchestra. Capitol 15241.

● Some more Russell in the Spanish manner. Pleasant, but not convincing. Andy has done better. Good orchestra support and recording.

*A New Kind of Song and October Twilight*; Frankie Carle and His Orchestra. Vocals by Nan Wright. Columbia 38291.

● Very, very good in the best Frankie Carle manner, especially *October Twilight*. Vocals are better than usual; in keeping with the mood and manner of the pieces.

*Cuckoo Bird Waltz*; Henri René and His Musette Orchestra. Vocal by The Manners Sisters, and *How Did He Look*; Joan Merrill, with Orchestra. Victor 20-3062.

● A very strange combination! When the waltz is strictly instrumental, it is fine because René is a good hand at this kind of music, but the vocalizing is out of place. Reverse is a rather embarrassing combination of sketch-song, in the "torch" vein, with some adenoidal singing and hysterical histrionics. Not convincing.

*As Time Goes By and Whispering*; Teddy Wilson Trio (Personnel: Teddy Wilson, piano; Billy Taylor, Jr., bass; Bill Purnell, drums). Musicraft 580.

● As delightful a piece of jazz making as anyone could wish for; light, imaginative, and rhythmic. Of course, it's Teddy Wilson's piano which sets the style. Kay Penton's singing is delicately pointed up by the fine background.

*Tabby the Cat and You're My Everything*; Toni Harper, with Eddie Beal and His Sextet. Columbia 38265.

● This little nine year old wonder is not as successful with her second release because somebody thought she should try to imitate her elders. Probably another case of too many cooks. The instrumental support is good.

*Chilicothe, Ohio and Plymouth Rock*; The Eddie Heywood Trio. Victor 20-2839.

● Cocktail bar music. Goes very well with a Manhattan.

*One For My Baby*; Johnny Mercer, with Paul Weston and His Orchestra.

*Down Among the Sheltering Palms*; Johnny Mercer and The Pied Pipers, with Paul Weston and His Orchestra. Capitol 15241.

*Dream and The Whiffenpoof Song*; The Pied Pipers, with Paul Weston and His Orchestra. Capitol 15246.

*Yes, We Kave No Bananas and It's Watcha Do With Watcha Got*; The Pied Pipers, with Paul Weston and His Orchestra. Capitol 15233.

● The styles of Johnny Mercer and The Pied Pipers go together like pretzels and beer. It

is natural to review them together. Speaking of beer, *One For My Baby* is a tears-in-your-beer kind of modern blues. This side has one up on the flipover, which is run-of-the-mill stuff for this team. In both *Dream* and *The Whiffenpoof Song*, the Pipers really outdo themselves. This is by far one of the best discs they have ever made. But in the remaining disc, they fall back to their more common pace and style. The orchestral support throughout is good, but outstanding in *Dream*. Don't miss this one!

*Café Continental*; Rosita Serrano, with Orchestra conducted by Rudolf Spira. London Album LA29, 3-10" discs.

● Rosita Serrano is the daughter of Sofia Del Campo, Chilean operatic artist, best known here for her excellent Victor records. Her daughter seems destined to become known to Americans in the same way — through records — for, in spite of the reputation she has in many European countries, the Chilean Nightingale has not yet appeared here in person.

This excellently recorded album reveals her to be a versatile, warm-voiced artist, at home in several languages, including English. Her *métier* appears to be the cabaret or show tune but the timbre of her voice suggests greater

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capabilities. Best, here, are her Spanish numbers — *Que Contento Estoy* and *Babalu*, with which language she seems more at ease. But in *Chanson Vagabonde* she shows she is equally at home with the French *chanson*. *Je Voudrais Vous Dire En Français* is a sly poke at American singers, affecting the French *chanson* manner, with an atrocious American accent. *Kleine Nachtigall* is not the classic song but a cabaret piece, in German. *Little Raindrops* is a child's, or childish, song in English which one suspects is sung with tongue in cheek because it sounds very much like a burlesque of a 300 pound opera singer doing a coy encore number at a concert "just for her dear, dear public". All in all, excellent entertainment.

*Deep River Music*; Johnny Mercer, Willard Robison, Chorus, with Paul Weston and His Orchestra. Capitol Album CC104, 3-10" discs.

● Robison has an enviable reputation as pianist and composer. He is one of those rare White musicians who understands the South, the Negro, and their music. He is respected as a jazz musician and praised as a creator of music which has its roots in the people. He is best known for his "sermons in rhythm", like *The Devil Is Afraid of Music*, a masterpiece of its kind. *Move Over Jehovah*, a more recent work in the same vein, is equally good. Both are included in this album. The other numbers are: *Don't Take Your Meanness Out On Me* and *Country Boy Blues*, both done by Johnny Mercer in his adenoidal way; *Old Folks*, which along with *The Devil and Move Over*, are sung with feeling and understanding by Willard Robison himself; and *Deep Summer Music*, is a mood picture for soloist, chorus and orchestra. Paul Weston and his orchestra lend excellent support throughout. All these works have one common characteristic: sincerity. A very satisfying album.

## Children's Records (Cont'd from page 101)

Singers, and Thomas Lender Jones and His Orchestra. Victor Album Y-374, 2-10" discs.

*Sylvester the Seal*; Told by Eddie Mayehoff, with All-Star Orchestra. Victor Album Y-373, 2-10" discs.

▲ In this group, intended to cover a greater age bracket, the quality and value of the stories is very uneven. If one can overlook the obvious anachronism of using Schubert's *Ave Maria* as the song the boy sings, this story leading to the Nativity, is mildly interesting. Dennis Day's trick of playing all the parts is less successful here than in *Johnny Appleseed*. The second album is more expertly done and Paul Wing's experienced hand is quite evident. The music and sounds, also, are better. In one part, the play has the Gilbert and Sullivan touch. The sentimental story is more likely to appeal to girls than boys. *Sylvester the Seal* is an amusing tale of a seal with ambitions to play a trumpet in a jazz band. Actually, this is a story about jazz, its inspirations, and its growth. Some creditable jazz is heard throughout and the story ends in a jam session. The reference to other well known jazz musicians is diverting. This album will appeal to older children, probably more to those who have already entered the jitter-bug or hep-cat stage. Good recording throughout and the material used, though not of the fine vinylite of the De Luxe Victors, is fairly smooth. —E.A.

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912 AS AMENDED BY THE ACTS OF MARCH 3, 1933, AND JULY 2, 1946. OF THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE, published monthly at New York, N. Y. for October 1, 1948.

State of New York ss.  
County of Westchester

Before me, a Notary public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Peter Hugh Reed, who having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the publisher of THE AMERICAN RECORD GUIDE and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management, etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the act of August 24, 1912, as amended by the acts of March 3, 1933, and July 2, 1946 (section 537, Postal Laws and Regulations), printed on the reverse of this form to wit: 1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Peter Hugh Reed, Pelham 65, New York; Editor, Peter Hugh Reed, Pelham 65, New York; Managing editor, A. W. Wickes, Pelham 65, New York; Business manager, Paul Girard, Pelham, 65, New York. 2. That the owner is: Peter Hugh Reed, Pelham 65, New York. 3. That the known bondholders, mortgages, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bond, mortgages, mortgages, or other securities are: None. 4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

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